Windsor, are buildings known to you, which are also in this style.

I ought to tell you that the character of the mouldings, different in all the styles, the plan of the piers, columns, &c. afford means for determining the age of buildings to those who have studied them; but I do not ask you to look at anything more than broad features. And now as to the duration of these styles.

Rickman dates the various varieties of mediæval architecture as follows:—

	A.D.	A.D.
Norman	1066 to	1189
Early English, or Lancet	1189 to	1307
Decorated (Reigns of Edward II. and III.)	1307 to	1377
Perpendicular	1377 to	1546

Of course these dates are intended only as approximations, as the use of one style did not stop immediately after the growth of another. Mr. Sharpe, who has made the most recent attempt to alter the titles and define the duration of the styles, gives the following table:—

	A.D.	A.D.	YEARS.
Norman	1066 to	1145 —	79
Transitional	1145 to	1190 —	45
Lancet period	1190 to	1245 —	55
Geometrical period	1245 to	1315 —	70
Curvilineal period (Decorated)	1315 to	1360 —	45
Rectilineal period (Perpendicular)	1360 to	1550 —	190

The differences you will see are very slight, with the exception of putting together buildings which were for some time considered as the completed developments of the Lancet style, and those heretofore called Early Decorated, as a distinct class, the necessity for which has long been felt.

It would be pleasant to talk over with you the peculiarities of some of the wonderful buildings of the mediæval period still remaining to us; to stumble with you upon the ruins of one of our abbeys,—Tintern, for example, in its delicious vale, cunningly placed, where,—

"A mighty window, hollow in the centre,
Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,
Through which the deepened glories once could enter,
Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,
Now yawns all desolate;"—

and to raise again all its parts from the evidences left, and show their purposes. Winchester Cathedral, itself a history of architecture; Wells, with its wonderful west front and glorious display of sculpture; Salisbury a perfect whole, the most uniform of all the cathedrals; Lincoln, with an accumulation of beauties no where rivalled; Lichfield, and its three spires; Westminster, resting-place of kings and record of early arts,—would furnish exhaustless topics. I will, in another letter, give you the plan of a complete cathedral and its subsidiary buildings, so that you may know the general arrangement which prevailed.

In France, the 13th and 14th centuries produced some noble buildings in the pointed style,—Notre Dame, Paris; the Cathedrals of Rouen, Rheims, Amiens, Chartres, St. Ouen at Rouen, &c.

Amiens cathedral affords a parallel with Salisbury. Whittington, Gwilt, and others think it shows the Pointed style was more advanced in France than England in the 13th century, but this seems to me doubtful. Germany affords some magnificent specimens of the skill of the middle ages, many of them doubtless known to you. If Cologne cathedral were completed, it would be one of the most astounding edifices in the world. The works were carried on till the beginning of the sixteenth century, when they were entirely stopped. In 1814, one of the original drawings was discovered in a corn-loft at Darmstadt, and came into the possession of Dr. Möller, the architect of the duke of Darmstadt. Being drawn on parchment, it had been used as the bottom of a sort of tray, on which to dry beans. Another part was elsewhere discovered, and being sold to the king of Prussia, was presented by him to Cologne. United with the drawing discovered at Darmstadt, it represents the whole of the principal front, and from this the workmen are at this day proceeding to complete the building. I remember the enthusiasm with which Dr. Möller told me the incident, some years ago, when I had the gratification of examining the buildings in Darmstadt with that venerable and accomplished gentleman. In 1821, the then king of Prussia began the work of completion at Cologne. In 1842, fresh arrangements were made, and from that time to this the works have been proceeded with, slowly but steadily. The crane of the ancient builders has continued to surmount the grass-covered summit of the tower, and prophesies completion!

When studying the architectural works of the middle ages, two curious circumstances force themselves on the attention. One is, the similarity apparent in the buildings of each particular period, although erected in various parts of Europe (the rapidity with which every alteration in style was made widely known); the other, the fact that many of these extraordinary buildings, which display the most lively imagination, sound judgment, and great mathematical skill, were erected at a time when the greatest ignorance prevailed, when kings were to be found unable to read, and men who knew a few physical truths were regarded as magicians.

On inquiry, it seems tolerably clear that they were executed by bands of men bound together by certain laws in an association partly of a religious character, who were, to a certain extent, protected by the church, and known as *Free Masons*. The early history of this extraordinary fraternity is obscured by fable. At the present time we know them simply as a body of individuals associated for social purposes, who meet at the Freemasons' Tavern and elsewhere, to discuss a dinner and dispense charity. Originally, however, their proceedings were very different. Some masonic writers seek to trace their existence from a remote time, and endeavour to show a connection with the Eleusinian mysteries and the Dionysiac artificers, who possessed the privilege of erecting public structures in Asia Minor. Without entering here on this questionable ground, or even stopping to ascertain the earliest date whereat their presence in England can be proved, suffice it to say they were the builders of many of our cathedrals and churches, and preserved within their lodges a large amount of scientific skill greatly disproportioned to the general attainments of the time. As I have elsewhere said, when a band departed on an undertaking, a charge provided that the most expert craftsman should be appointed master of the works, under whom, when they reached their destination, every tenth man was appointed warden over his nine fellows; a camp was erected and a lodge built in which to hold their meetings and regulate their prices. Here also the apprentices resorted at certain periods to hear discourses upon the sciences, and lectures on morality: for at this period it is supposed that none could become a free and accepted mason without serving under a master for seven years; during which time he was gradually initiated into the mysteries, and was ultimately accepted as a brother.

There is not, in the whole history of architecture, a more curious point than this, although it is, in many respects, obscure. In studying the works of the freemasons, they become additionally interesting if we have a knowledge of the men; and the men, in like manner, are invested with greater importance when we reflect upon their wonderful productions.

Several years ago my attention was led to the fact that many of our ancient buildings exhibited, on the face of the walls, both inside and outside, marks of a peculiar character on the face of the stones which were evidently the work of the original builders, and it occurred to me that if examined and compared they might serve to throw light upon these bands of operatives. I made a large collection of them in England, France, Belgium, and Germany, some of which were published in the "Archæologia." They are simply the marks made by the masons to identify their work, but it is curious to find them identical in different countries, and descending from early times to the present day, for in parts of Germany and Scotland tables of marks are still preserved in the Lodges, and one is given to the (practical) mason, on taking up his freedom. He cuts it, however, on the bed of the stone now, instead of on the face. The marks are usually two or three inches long, and here you have a representation of a few of them.

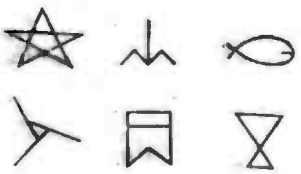

FIG. 38.

Many of them have a religious character, symbolizing the Trinity, eternity, &c. and the fish-form is not uncommon.

The constant occurrence in ancient buildings of this fish form, or *vesica piscis*, as it is called, has led to much discussion. The early Christians symbolized our Saviour by the form of a fish, perhaps because the initial letters of Christ's name and titles form the Greek word for fish: moreover, they called themselves *pisciculi*, considering that the Christian life commenced in the waters of baptism. The fish itself was accordingly sculptured for decoration, but seems to have been superseded by the fish-shaped compartment formed by the intersection of two equal circles. In England it is to be seen over many doorways, enclosing the figure of Christ, as at Malmesbury Abbey Church, Barfreston and Rochester Cathedral. Windows are sometimes found of this shape. The seals of most religious bodies were of this form; and some antiquaries have even attributed the origin of the Pointed style of architecture to the use of it! At Poitiers and Angoulême, where I found many masons' marks, it occupies a very prominent position on the west front of the churches. All this, however, is more curious than useful, and need not be carried further now: I will give you a truth instead of a mysticism, which is that I am

Always very faithfully yours,
Reggio.

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

Lynn.—Building operations are going on to a great extent on the east side of this town. Numbers of new streets have been formed, and the houses are most of them built on a regular plan. The town appears to be extending, and the population to be increasing rapidly. The railways have given an impetus to many kinds of business. No further progress has been made with the estuary works. Attempts, says the *Norfolk Chronicle*, have been made to stop up the further end of the new cut, but as yet unsuccessfully. At low water the workmen may do a great deal towards erecting a barrier to the sea, but at high water their work is demolished, and the new channel is silting up very fast at every tide.

Bottisham Lode.—The foundation-stone of a new church was laid here on Tuesday week. The building will be a small one. Mr. Hawkins, of London, is the architect. Upwards of 900*l.* have been subscribed towards the cost; 500*l.* of it by the vicar. The site was granted by Trinity College, Cambridge—the patrons.

Abingdon.—It is intended to repair and restore the County Hall at Abingdon, erected in 1677 by Inigo Jones. The Berks county gentry have come forward in aid of this object; but, as the repairs and restorations will require from 800*l.* to 900*l.* it is hoped that the architectural and archæological societies will lend a helping hand.

Leighton-Buzzard.—The cost of restoring the steeple to its original height, 192 feet, and repairing the roofs, is estimated at about 500*l.* The parishioners have resolved that a subscription be entered into forthwith.

Folkestone.—The great increase in the number of gas consumers during the last few years has rendered the company's works far too small for the quantity of gas to be stored at the present time. A new gasometer is being erected.

Winchelsea.—The ancient church of Ickle-

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